

EXHIBIT 4

Paul Kidwell

[REDACTED]
St. Clair Shores, MI 48080
[REDACTED]

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To: The Honorable Chief Justice Robert J. Jonker:

RE Character Statement for Christopher Allan Boden
(USA v. Boden et al Case # 1:21-cr-0040-RJJ-1)

In 2001, I was interested in Tesla coils and heard that there was going to be a meeting in Kalamazoo, MI of people to show off the coils they had made. I found out that the organization putting on the meet was called The Geek Group (TGG) and that they were a 501c3 organization that would accept donations of industrial equipment. I am part-owner of an engineering firm, and at the time we had a lot of material that we didn't need and couldn't sell. I drove across Michigan to attend the event and met Chris Boden for the first time. I found him to be a charismatic individual with a driving vision to form an organization where people interested in science and technology could find a home. In a world that considers such individuals to be awkward outcasts, Chris Boden had created a place where geeks and nerds could be appreciated for their abilities. It was a place where they could gather and socialize with likeminded people while working on projects well beyond anything they could do on their own. That trip was my first instance of providing support to TGG. I delivered a truck load of electrical surplus for use by members of TGG. I have been supporting TGG ever since.

Over the years, I visited TGG at least one weekend a month. My support grew to the point that I became a board member and was elected to be Chairman of the Board of Directors. In that position, I had near constant contact with Mr. Boden. He was ceaseless in his efforts to grow and build TGG. Membership bloomed into the thousands with people from across the globe volunteering support. TGG attained national stature and received invites to participate in technology conferences at The White House. Eventually TGG grew to become a National Science Center, then The National Science Institute (NSI).

TGG/NSI not only worked to provide a venue for geeks and nerds to congregate, it also provided a place where people could learn. Tools and equipment were made available for people to try doing things that they'd never have an opportunity to attempt. Other organizations such as Open Doors and The Wood Turners Guild were provided space to hold their meetings. The organization grew to be an asset to the community at large. On numerous occasions, Chris opened the facility to provide heated shelter to the homeless when the weather turned bitter cold, or cooling shelter in the summer when the community experienced power outages.

Unfortunately, lofty goals and good intentions do not pay the bills. Through its long history, TGG/NSI was plagued with a severe lack of funding. Donated material that had millions of dollars of value on paper was worth next to nothing in reality when all it was good for was being

scrapped and recycled. Mr. Boden worked tirelessly to secure donations to keep the doors open, the heat and lights on, and the toilets flushing. Numerous revenue streams were explored to keep paying the bills. From recycling scrap material to refurbishing and selling laptop computers. Even then, Chris Boden worked to benefit the community. Hundreds of the refurbished laptops wound up being given to underprivileged children whose parents couldn't afford to provide them with one. That program grew to the point the Mayor of Grand Rapids showcased the program and recognized Chris Boden and NSI as being an asset to the community. With NSI growing in stature, I envisioned it continuing to be an asset to the community. I had hopes of it being a place I could retire to. I thought the title Director Emeritus of The National Science Institute sounded like something to look forward to...

But all too often it became a choice of which bill to let slide each month and if it were really necessary to have heat in the winter. Such was the situation when Chris discovered the world of cryptocurrency and Bitcoin. The venture started out as an educational program where Chris taught a class in how to purchase and hold Bitcoin. There was an exchange that would offer \$10 in Bitcoin to anyone who opened an account and would also give \$10 in Bitcoin to anyone referring new customers. Part of the class Chris taught included walking the students through setting up their wallet safely and securely as well as facilitating their first Bitcoin purchase.

In the grand scheme of things this never generated very much revenue, but Chris learned that there was a demand in the community and a general interest in the technology. Monies derived helped pay the bills, but came nowhere near being enough to fund the NSI operations. And while the operation was conducted personally by Chris, all proceeds immediately went to pay whatever bill was coming due. Through all this, Chris' motivation was to do what was necessary to keep the dream of NSI alive so it could continue to benefit the members and the community at large.

At no point did I ever think that Chris was willfully violating any regulation that would generate the response it did. The entire affair could have been dealt with in fifteen minutes by an agent simply walking up to the counter and explaining that he was engaged in a regulated activity, and there were consequences if he continued. As I understand it, the largest Bitcoin transaction Chris ever made was to the federal agent fifteen minutes before fifty or more law enforcement officers entered the NSI building. I do not know what they expected to find, but by their overzealous actions they effectively destroyed the organization. The excessive and aggressive behavior of the agents during the raid did even more damage. From smashing the lobby floor to try to open an *empty safe*, to destroying cabinets full of hard drives even after we offered them the key, to terrorizing the volunteers and students in the basement, it became clear their expectations were to find far more than they did. When they didn't find what they expected, they became even more angry and unnecessarily destructive, further damaging TGG/NSI.

The publicity generated by this unnecessary show of force chased away the institutional sponsors that the NSI relied on. It devastated the company and organization we had all come to love and that the community relied on so much. Within days, incoming revenue fell to nothing and twenty years' worth of Chris' tireless work to benefit the community was erased.

Since then, Chris has been building a new life using the same motivation and ideals he used to build TGG/NSI. Always striving to educate and inform, he has created a YouTube channel where he produces educational videos and another that aims to calm people suffering from anxiety or autism. Chris has distanced himself from anything to do with Cryptocurrency and I believe that there is no chance he would risk engaging in such regulated activity again. I strongly believe that the loss already visited upon Mr. Boden, the NSI, and the community as a whole, is far beyond what was deserved for any misdeed that Mr. Boden could have committed. I ask, Your Honor, that you take what has happened into consideration and exercise leniency when sentencing Mr. Boden.

Thank you for your consideration,

Paul Kidwell
VP of R & D
Preferred Engineering
(former) Chairman of the Board of Directors
The National Science Institute